



PATRICIA S. PLOEHN, LCSW  
Director

**County of Los Angeles**  
**DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020  
(213) 351-5602

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November 10, 2009

To: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman  
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From: Patricia S. Ploehn, LCSW  
Director

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Patricia S. Ploehn", is written over the typed name and title.

**MARCH 13, 2007 BOARD AGENDA ITEM #15 – EDUCATION CONSULTANT  
REFERRALS AND BI-ANNUAL REPORT ON SCHOOL DISTRICTS' PERFORMANCE  
IN PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR FOSTER CHILDREN**

The services provided by the contracted Education Consultants continue to prove to be essential to the academic progress of many of the youth under the jurisdiction of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). This report covers the outcomes from March 2009 through August 2009. The corresponding statistical data summarize and support the need for continued high level Educational Consultant Services for our youth.

The Education Consultant program was created by the motion of the March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007 Board Agenda #15. It has been active for over two years and the original concept to provide assistance in resolving academic issues for foster youth has been achieved.

The Education Consultants are contracted service providers operating directly under the DCFS Education and Mentoring Section. They are credentialed teachers and former school administrators who are able to evaluate educational information, to advocate for appropriate services, and to assist in the formulation of academic plans. Because they are well-versed in Federal and State Education Code and special education law, they can effectively address the educational issues raised by our Children's Social Workers (CSWs) or caregivers. They are experts at navigating the

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varied 81 school districts within Los Angeles County to achieve the desired outcome for our youth.

The requests for assistance from the Education Consultants have continued to increase over this reporting period. During this reporting period, there were 3,831 education challenges faced by 2,134 of our children and youth resolved by the Education Consultants. In the prior reporting period there were 2,910 education challenges faced by 1,612 of our children. These numbers represent a significant increase over the prior reporting period and accurately reflect the need for this level of expertise in advocating for our children's educational advancement. In December 2008, four additional Education Consultants were brought on board, contributing to the increase in services provided.

	September 2008-February 2009	March 2009-August 2009	Approximate Increase
Number of children served	1612	2134	31%
Number of issues addressed	2910	3831	32%

The Education Consultants have received increasing numbers of requests to assist with the review and coordination of referrals for appropriate educational programs for foster youth who are preparing to enter adult life. This segment of the foster youth population is at the highest risk of experiencing serious difficulties or delays in completing their academic programs and successfully transitioning to adult life.

The high demand for this type of assistance is such that the referral and review process is being further streamlined to facilitate a successful transition for these foster youth. The process we are exploring will involve a coordination of efforts by the Education Consultants, Youth Development Services and the DCFS regional offices to identify youth who are at risk of failing in their educational programs. This process will be conducted through the Permanency Planning Conference (PPC) meeting to develop and implement a detailed academic case plan for the foster youth. Review of the academic case plan will occur at the regular semi-annual PPC meeting. At that point it will be determined if the current academic case plan remains appropriate, or if additional, or alternative services are needed.

The Education Consultant will remain a participant in the PPC meeting until such time as the youth has either completed their educational program or formulated a viable transition plan.

It is hoped that with this level of assistance we will see an increase in the number of youth that graduate from high school and successfully transition from foster care.



### Data

As previously stated, there were 3,831 education challenges faced by 2,134 of our children and youth that were resolved by the Education Consultants, reflecting a continued growth in services.

Data was collected and tabulated from the monthly tracking log submitted by each of the Education Consultants (refer to Attachment). The log identifies 19 specific areas of services, one of which is categorized "other." Multiple service areas can be selected for each referral, therefore, when tabulating the total, 100% will be exceeded. An average of 1.8 service areas per case were received and completed for each of the 2,134 children served, which is consistent with the prior reporting period. While there was some change in the most frequently requested services, some of this may be attributed to the summer break and certain services being directly tied to school activities.

Below is a table comparing the frequency of services received during the current reporting period (March 1, 2009 through August 31, 2009) and the previous reporting period (September 1, 2009 through February 28, 2009.)

The Education Consultants participation in Team Decision-Making Meetings (TDM), which made up almost a quarter of the services provided in the prior reporting period, declined slightly in percentage during this reporting period; though the actual number of TDMs attended increased. Focused educational services for transitioning youth was the most frequent service requested, an area not separately identified in the original 18 areas of services and which resulted in the participation of the Educational Consultants in the Permanency Planning Conference (PPC) meetings.

#### **TOP SERVICE CATEGORIES**

<b>Service</b>	<b>Percentage In prior report</b>	<b>Service</b>	<b>Percentage in current Report</b>
Team Decision Making (TDM)	24.8%	Academic (Grades)	23.62%
IEP	24.0%	Team Decision Making (TDM)	21.70%
Enrollment	19.4%	IEP	21.09%
Academic (Grades)	18.8%	Enrollment	17.39%
Special Education	17.1%	Behavioral	15.32%
Behavioral Issues	12.2%	Special Education	13.92%
Records	11.2%	Records	11.43%

**New Solicitation**

A Request for Statement of Qualifications (RFSQ) solicitation is currently underway to continue the Education Consultant Services into the upcoming 2010/2011 fiscal year with two one-year options to renew the contracts for a total of three years.

**Classification and Specification Study**

The Education and Mentoring Section continues to work with the Chief Executive Office's Compensation Policy Division to create a County personnel item to provide the services currently obtained through contracting. The item will be established and ready to fill once the fiscal climate improves.

As indicated above, the Education Consultant Services are essential to the academic success of many of the children served by our Department. We appreciate your Board's support as we continue our efforts to improve the academic outcomes of the children we serve.

The concept behind the motion has been achieved; therefore, unless otherwise requested, this will be the final report.

If you have questions, please contact me or your staff may contact Armand Montiel, Board Liaison at (213) 351-5530.

PSP:MF  
MG:jh

Attachment

c: Chief Executive Officer  
County Counsel  
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

